





Sir Charles Forbes 1st Bart. From a photograph in the possession of  
Messrs. Forbes, Forbes Campbell & Co., Ltd, Bombay.



# A FORGOTTEN FRIEND OF INDIA



# A FORGOTTEN FRIEND OF INDIA

Sir Charles Forbes 1st Bart.

BY

RUTTONJEE ARDESHIR WADIA

*Published for*  
J. B. H. WADIA  
*by*  
Padmaja Publications  
BARODA

First Published, 1946

*COPYRIGHT*

Printed by V. R. Sawant at the Associated Advertisers & Printers Ltd., 105,  
Arthur Road, Tardeo, Bombay 7 and Published by Kishansingh Chavda for  
Padmaja Publications, Baroda.

Respectfully

dedicated

to

Mrs. DHUNBALJI ROMANJI H. WADIA

&

Messrs. FORBES FORBES CAMPBELL & CO. LTD.,

by

the Author



## FOREWORD

---

Ever since my childhood I have been very familiar with the name of Sir Charles Forbes. At the feet of my grandmother I heard a good many stories of his loving friendship for her father, Bomanjee Hormarjee Wadia, popularly known as Bomanjee Bawa. I could never forget how a goodly portion of a debt due to his firm by Hormarjee Wadia was generously written off, and this was the crowning example of the intimate friendship that bound the House of Forbes and the Wadia family. When a short while ago, Mr. Ruttonjee Ardesir Wadia told me that he had prepared a short memoir of Sir Charles Forbes and offered to let me go through the typescript, I felt very grateful and happy indeed, and when he asked me to write a Foreword, I looked upon it not merely as an honour but as a pious duty. Like myself, I am sure, there are many, even among the Wadias, who have looked upon Sir Charles merely as a generous friend of the family. But the Memoir now published brings out several aspects of Sir Charles' career which mark him out as a great friend of India and Indians, one of those comparatively few Englishmen who have looked upon India not as a milch cow to be fattened or starved in the interests of England, but as a country to be fostered in her own right, and he did not hesitate to say that. In many respects he found Indians far superior to his own countrymen. It is very interesting that during his membership of the House of Commons he played the role of the Member for India. Dadabhai Nowroji popularised the idea of the

drain from India, but we find Sir Charles in 1836 speaking of the "annual drain from India" and spoke of "plundering the people of India day after day and year after year to an extent horrible to be contemplated." He said that in fifty years more had been exacted from India than "would be sufficient to pay off the national debt" of England, and this was after the Napoleonie Wars.

How noble Sir Charles Forbes was is strikingly brought out by the stand he took in eonnection with the opium traffic with China. To Bomanjee Hormarjee he wrote: "I know not whether you have anything to do with opium but I would repeat to you the advice I have often given to your worthy father before you—abstain from this cursed traffic." A captain of one of his ships indulged in this traffic and Sir Charles was so wild about it that he ordered that he should be superseded if he attempted to smuggle opium into China. As a member of the Court of Directors of the East India Company he fought against the opium trade as being "disgraceful and abominable."

It is interesting to find that he was most generous and expeeted his friends to be equally generous. He would subscribe to some good object in England, and would also subseribe some thousands in the name of Hormarjee or Bomanjee Wadia in anticipation of his approval. Similarly he expeeted his Wadia friends to contribute on his behalf to a good cause in India without previously consulting him, and when this was not done on one occasion he reprimanded Bomanjee for his remissness.

Sir Charles was always keen on supporting the claims of Indians and it was due to his advocacy that they were first permitted to serve as Jurors.

No wonder if such a large-hearted Englishman was honoured by Indians of all communities when he left

London, Oct 28<sup>th</sup> 1807.

My dear Friends

You will see from a number of your excellent and feeling letters of the C. T. Regy.  
From my heart I pity the poor People of Liverpool  
I pray that God may pity and comfort them.  
But this is a Cold Country Government  
and I fear they have little to expect from  
it, even aided by the high sounding names  
of Clare, and Pelham &c. if indeed they  
give themselves any trouble about the matter.  
I understand the Committee have written  
to those Greek Men (in Salem - like our English  
no greater than their neighbours) and I hope they  
may make themselves in so good a cause, but with  
that I have nothing to do, your letter being the  
only one I have received on the subject; and  
therefore, I have great pleasure in making you  
the medium, of conveying my own and my family's  
contrabution to the Island of Singapor raised by our  
British Friends, which does them great Credit.  
With every good wish to yourself, your Mother,  
and all your family - I remain, very sincerely  
Yours affec Son  
Bomby. Sir Ch. Forbes.

Facsmile of a letter written by Sir Charles Forbes.



India in 1811 after 22 years' stay in Bombay. Again in 1840 his friends in India sought to commemorate his memory in Bombay with a statue and sent him an Address which was read out to him in his English home by Ardeshir Cursetjee Wadia.

For the trouble he has taken to bring out this memoir, Mr. Ruttonjee Wadia has earned our thanks, of Wadias, most of all, but even of Bombayites in general and even of all Indians who can appreciate the efforts of an English friend on behalf of India at a time when English education in India had barely begun and the possibility of an Indian National Congress was not even dreamt of. There is a beauty in noble life which is admirably brought out in the life and career of Sir Charles Forbes.

Bangalore,  
8th April, 1946.

A. R. WADIA.



## INTRODUCTION

---

It may not be known to many of the present generation of Parsees that upto even the first decade of the present century, the name of Forbes—popularly pronounced as “Farbus”—was frequently mentioned in talks as that of a great benefactor of Indians in general and Parsis in particular, especially the Wadias among the latter. The tradition of his benevolence during his fairly long residence of 22 years in Bombay was handed down from father to son. His spontaneous help to the family of his trusted and intimate friend, Hormarjee Bomanjee Wadia, in its dark days and the genuine interest he took in the welfare of his children, has become part and parcel of the family history of the Wadias. In my younger days it was common to hear our elders remark in the case of parents arguing against their daughters’ studying—

ચાલ, ક્યા ફરબેસની ઓર્ધીસમાં જવાની છે.

(i.e. enough, she is not going to work in the office of Forbes). This shows how employment and Forbes had become two interchangeable terms in popular conception.

Such was my mental background when, in the course of my work of collecting materials for writing a short history of the Dockyard and Shipbuilding and of the Wadias, Mrs. Dhanbaiji, widow of Mr. Bomanjee Hormusjee Wadia (a great-grandson of Hormarjee Wadia, a broker and friend of Sir Charles Forbes) gave me a number of old papers which were in her possession. Amongst these papers, there was a large number of letters of Sir Charles Forbes and John Forbes, the founders of Forbes & Co., addressed to

Hormarjee Wadia. I had cursorily gone through them at first and had made some extracts from some of them. But when I perused them very carefully, I realised the importance they possessed. As will be seen, they made not only history but also unmistakably showed the great qualities of head and heart the writer possessed. A facsimile of his letters reproduced on page 20, will show with what meticulous care he wrote his letters and how even small details did not escape his careful attention. In fact, his whole life was one record of meticulous care. The main purpose of this little Memoir is to preserve the memory of a great and good man who did his utmost during a long and eventful life to bring about the progress of India and the Indians whose many good qualities he fully appraised and appreciated. Above all what has impressed me most is his innate quality of sympathy towards the oppressed and the fallen, great and small. To think of a widow and children of a petty clerk in his office, to think of giving pension to the widow of his domestic servant in Bombay, having parted decades ago, to subscribe to funds for relieving distress in this country which he had left over a quarter of a century ago, to appeal to Londoners to subscribe to the same, are but a few examples which show human nature in its noblest and sublimest form.

I have thought it my duty to dedicate this small Memoir to Mrs. Dhunbaiji Bomanji Wadia and to Messrs. Forbes, Forbes, Campbell & Co. Bai Dhunbaiji has preserved these old papers with care almost bordering on second sight. This is all the more creditable to her when one realises the long, hard and difficult times through which she has passed but which by the grace of God are over and have happily ended. And I have equally thought it my

duty to associate with this Memoir the name of the respected House of Forbes, Forbes, Campbell & Co. Ltd., who are the successors of Forbes & Co. . . . "the first agency House" established in India.

Lastly, I have to express my sincere thanks to Raja-sevasakta Professor Ardeshir Ruttonjee Wadia, B.A. (Cantab), Bar-at-Law, for having complied with my request to write a Foreword to this Memoir.

Cumballa Hill,

Bombay, 4th March 1946.

RUTTONJEE ARDESHIR WADIA.



# A FORGOTTEN FRIEND OF INDIA

---

*Sir Charles Forbes, First Baronet.*

Not many of our countrymen know the life and the life-work of one of the greatest and most sincere friends of our country who, during his stay of 22 years in Bombay, championed our country's cause on several occasions single-handed and who even in his retirement in England continued to labour for India's sake for nearly 40 years as a Director of the East India Co., and as a member of the British Parliament, till his demise in 1849. What A. O. Hume, William Wedderburn, Henry Cotton and a few others did for our country in the last decades of the 19th and the first decade of the present century, Charles Forbes did in the first half of the last century.

## EARLY LIFE

The subject of this memoir, Charles Forbes, was born in 1773\*. He was one of the sons of Rev. George Forbes of Lochelle, while his mother was a daughter of one Gorden Stuart. He was a descendant of Alexander Forbes of Kinaldie and Pitsligo and was in the year 1833 declared to be the nearest heir-male of Alexander, 3rd Lord Forbes of Pitsligo.

Charles was educated at the Aberdeen University of which later he was elected Lord Rector. He was created a Baronet on 23rd September, 1823.

\* *Bombay and Western India*, Vol I, p. 395 and Jagat Premi, February 1850. The Dictionary of National Biography gives 1774 as the year of his birth.

His uncle, John Forbes, had come out to India in 1764 as a Civil Servant and a Junior Merchant and remained in Bombay till about 1799. It was he who founded the firm of Forbes & Co., which was the first Mercantile House in India.\*\*

Charles Forbes arrived in Bombay on 4th June 1789 to join the firm of Forbes & Co. of which he became the head on the retirement of his uncle.

Before the Act of 1793, there were no free merchants in India but only the E. I. Co.'s servants were allowed to trade under a license from Government. In the last quarter of the 18th century amongst such licensed merchants, was one John Forbes, who occupied a high position in Bombay. Some Parsis came in contact with this firm and became their brokers. One such broker was Hirji Jivan, an ancestor of Bombay's well-known citizen, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, Baronet, and on his death in 1794, Hormarjee Bomanjee Wadia took his place.

Charles Forbes on the retirement of his uncle came to occupy a position of eminence as a merchant and a citizen and began a career full of usefulness not only to the Firm, but also to the Government.

### CAREER IN BOMBAY

There was not a single movement of a public or a semi-public character during his stay of nearly 22 years, which did not have his support. His period of stay synchronised with the period which followed the partial throwing open of the trade by the Charter of 1793. This was perhaps the first blow to the monopoly of trade which the E. I. Co. had enjoyed since its start in 1600. It was also the period of the Revolutionary Wars which led to

\*\* Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XIX pp. 185-186.

**JOHN FORBES, Esq.**

Founder of the firm of Forbes & Co.,

From a Painting in the possession of Messrs. Forbes Forbes Campbell & Co.



an increase in trade between India and England, particularly in cotton. This gave a fillip to shipbuilding in this country. It naturally afforded opportunities to merchants who worked with caution—both European and Indian—to trade and amass large fortunes, for this period also witnessed a number of failures in England and in Bombay. But the House of Forbes under the able guidance and sagacity of Charles Forbes steered clear of these shoals.\* By the end of the 18th Century, the House of

\* How cautious he was in trade will be noticed from the following extracts from his letter addressed to Hormarjee :—

In a letter dated 10th February 1815, he wrote :—

"On perusing some of the letters from Bombay, my uncle (Mr. John Forbes) remarked : "They are running a mint." I told him that my advice to them was to be contented with buying and selling upon the spot at handsome profits. I was decidedly against extending shipping business. Had you contented yourself with sending home the *Lowjee* or even our other ships to give them employment, I should not have thought too much of it, but to be purchasing and freighting ships in all parts of the world with goods which have risen hundred per cent upon original cost is *madness*....I see nothing but ruinous loss or at least very great disappointment in the issue of all these speculations."

In a letter of 15th June 1815, he again wrote :—

"I have read with astonishment and alarm *the impudent proposals* of Hughes and Chalmers for a joint speculation in cotton and piec-goods....I must solemnly protest against such a concern. It is wild in the extreme. I cannot help admiring *the modesty* of these gentlemen, in regard to advances, rates of interest, percentage on cost etc. etc. Their paper is really a curiosity....I never before heard of a partner proposing to share the profits without bearing his proportionate share of loss....I fear Java speculation has turned your heads. You seem to be dashing at everything, in every quarter....I am in hourly apprehension of hearing of some random speculation by Mr. Calder, for the firm in their instructions to him seem determined that he shall speculate somewhere or other,—to Europe, Asia, Africa or America. In all their letters they talk of "ample capital," "spirit of enterprise," "anxiety to push commercial speculations, wherever there may be an opening" etc. etc. Where, in God's name, is this to end? What they call "Capital" is neither more nor less than other people's money—liable to be called upon at a moment's notice....You must put a stop to it in your own interests. I deem this absolutely necessary for the safety of the establishment which these gentlemen would seem to be determined to undermine and overthrow. I have almost made up my mind to the necessity of returning to India. My uncle says "The House will be ruined by too great a command of Funds."

Forbes with the other English House of Bruce Fawcett & Co. came to occupy a position of great prominence in the commercial world of Bombay, so much so that the Government of Bombay under Jonathan Duncan had to seek the financial aid of these two firms between 1800 and 1805. And it so happened that the Brokers to these two firms were two Parsi brothers Pestonjee Bomanjee and Hormarjee Bomanjee Wadia, who placed all their resources and their influence at the disposal of the firm and the Government.

Mr. S. M. Edwardes, I.C.S., in the *Gazetteer of the Bombay City and Island* states that in 1802 Pestonjee Bomanjee Wadia relieved the Government of Bombay under Jonathan Duncan at a most critical period in its history. The financial troubles, however, were not over, for immediately thereafter on account of the Maratha Wars the Bombay Government were badly in need of money. They therefore entered into an arrangement with seven prominent merchants of Bombay—three Europeans and four Parsees—by which all cotton grown in the Presidency, which was expected to be about 85,000 bales was to be purchased by them at cost price, with Rs. 10 cash down per bale. This was what is known as the Northern Loan. Considering the value of money at the time, the limited resources of the place and the then infant state of the cotton trade, it was an important transaction. The parties were Charles Forbes, Henry Fawcett, Alexander

And yet in another letter of 14th July 1815, he wrote :—

"They are all reckoning upon Rupees *too fast*.... The outturn of their imprudent speculation to this country will open their eyes and their purses also. It is a good joke to see Mr. Allport's treatises upon "enterprises," "speculations" etc. etc. Tell him to take "PRUDENCE" for his motto and to go 'slowly and surely.' "

Adamson, Pestonjee Bomanjee, Hormarjee Bomanjee.  
Ardesear Dady\* and Sorabjee Muncherjee.

But of greater importance to the Government of Bombay was the further financial aid which these two commercial firms of Forbes and Bruce with their Parsi brokers rendered in the next year, i.e., 1803. The financial condition at that time being very serious, Jonathan Duncan, the Governor, sought the advice of Charles Forbes who was then hardly 30 years old to devise means to procure cash for the Treasury. This correspondence reveals the extent of help given to the Government when the latter was unable to pay interest on its loans and even the salaries of its Civil Servants.\*\*

When through the exertions of Sir James Mackintosh, the Recorder of Bombay, the Bombay Literary Society—now known as the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society—was founded in 1804, Charles Forbes became its Treasurer.

It may thus be observed that Forbes was the guide, philosopher and friend of the citizens during the period he was in Bombay, and his relations with them were extremely cordial. His name ranked high in the commercial world for ability, foresight and rectitude of character. He treated his broker Hormarjee as a personal friend as appears from his letters to him. He amassed a great fortune but his purse was open for every good cause, whether the object was of a public or of a private character. His liberality was as unostentatious as it was large. To quote the words of Mr. S. S. Bengalee, C.I.E., the well-

\* It may be mentioned here that (Sir) Charles Forbes was appointed one of the executors of the Will of Ardesear Dady (1756-1810) along with Alexander Adamson (1747-1807) an English Merchant who had lived many years in Bombay but had predeceased the testator.

\*\* *Bombay and Western India Vol. I, pp. 248 & 254-68.*

known social reformer, "Forbes became a great friend of the Bombay natives, became acquainted with their manners and customs, with their abilities and integrity, helped them in their activities and their industries, absorbed himself in deeds beneficial to them and was responsible for so many meritorious deeds that his memory will ever remain green. When he left India, he was only 38 and yet he was the beloved friend of Hindus, Mohamedans, Parsis and others. He never made distinction between the black and the white and since he had amassed his fortune with the help of natives he never forgot that obligation till the day of his death."

### DEPARTURE FROM INDIA FAREWELL ADDRESS

It was quite fit therefore that his departure for good from this country was marked by public manifestations of great regard and esteem. He was entertained by his European friends at a dinner on 19th October 1811, and by his broker and friend Hormarjee at Lowjee Castle on 26th October at which function many Europeans were also invited. After the toast of the guest, states the *Bombay Courier* of 9th November, Jainsetjee Bomanjee Wadia, the Master Builder of the Government Dockyard, conveyed to Sir (then Mr.) Forbes the affection the people of Bombay felt towards him for his character, and thanked him for the services he had rendered them and to their families, and finally Parsis, Hindus and Mohamedans presented him a Public Address on 24th October in which they requested him to accept a Piece of Plate of the value of 1,500 guineas. In this Address they expressed their sentiments in the following memorable words:—

"We native merchants and shroffs of Bombay come to bid you farewell with a hearty concern for the loss of that friend in whom general benevolence has been uniformly marked by the liberal patronage of native industry and the general support of native character..... We address you with the freedom of old friends who have long known you. Many of us you have laid under personal obligations,—which, though you may not remember, we can never forget,—and we have all seen your prosperity with satisfaction, for who ever applied to you in the hour of distress and did not find you the friend of the poor and the helpless?..... But it is a train full of gentle virtues which have won our hearts—the generous concern you have ever taken in the interests of your friends, your zeal for their welfare, your sympathy in their misfortunes, the assistance you have been ever ready to afford with your advice, your influence, your exertions and the noble sacrifices you have so often made when the vicissitudes of human life have appealed to your benevolence, these are qualities peculiarly your own, they spring from the feelings of a superior mind and with all our admiration for your country's virtues eminently distinguish you amongst your countrymen.

We are about to separate, in all probability for ever, this therefore is not the moment for worldly praise, it is gratitude and affection that speak and request you to accept as a small but sincere memorial of our friendship, a Service of Plate of the value of 1,500 guineas engraved with the Arms of your family and bearing the following inscription:

*To Charles Forbes, Esq.,  
From*

*The Native Merchants and Shroffs of Bombay  
In Memory of Twenty-two years' Experience of his  
Liberality as a Gentleman, his Disinterestedness*

*as a Friend and his spirited Integrity as a British Merchant.*

And now Sir, Farewell. The loss we sustain by your return to the land of your fathers is great indeed and to many of us irreparable. But we are not so selfish as to forget the happiness that awaits you in the bosom of your family, your friends, your country. That your days may be long amongst them, that you may always live in prosperity and honour and that in the enjoyment of your well-earned fortune God may continue His Blessings, is the sincere and the affectionate prayer of your friends and obliged humble servants."

In reply Mr. Forbes stated:

"The experience of two and twenty years to which you have done me the honour to advert enables me with equal pride and satisfaction to declare that in the intercourse I have had with Native Merchants and Shroffs, I have witnessed acts of generosity, fidelity and honour which could not in any country be surpassed; to have been connected with such men for so long a period is an advantage which I shall never cease to acknowledge; to have obtained their confidence and esteem is a distinction which I shall be anxious to preserve with my life. The generous memorial of your friendship which you have honoured with an inscription so far beyond my deserts will ever be highly valued by me as a pledge of the principles which have bound us so long together and I shall bequeath it to my children as a sacred remembrance of the gratitude and respect their father owed to the Native Merchants and Shroffs of Bombay..... There are many powerful ties which will continue to bind my affections to India. I came so young amongst you that there is hardly any feeling dear to human nature which is not

associated in my mind with the island of Bombay, no change of time or place can destroy such an association, the memory of your worth is connected with the happiest days of my life and your prosperity and honour will never cease to be objects of my solicitude."

Perhaps no words more genuine than these have ever been uttered by a British merchant. During the next 38 years of his life till the day of his death, no event in Bombay of any importance ever escaped his vigilant eyes. Whether it was famine in Gujarat, or fire in Surat, or whether it was the misfortune of an Indian Prince or any of his Indian friends, it always evoked a generous response from him as we shall notice hereafter, and equally true were the sentiments of his Indian friends and admirers, for they never failed to appreciate his sterling qualities of head and heart.

On Tuesday 5th November 1811, he bade good-bye to his numerous friends and admirers and left for England by the ship *Caroline*. On the ship there were other distinguished passengers, Sir James Mackintosh, the Recorder of Bombay, and Robert Rickards, a senior Bombay Civilian\* (who also subsequently rendered help to the cause of India in the Court and in Parliament) who left India for good.

The following extract from the *Bombay Courier* of 11th November 1811 describes the final scene of Mr. Forbes' departure:

"At 4 O'clock in the evening Charles Forbes, Esq., attended by a numerous train of friends and many of the most respectable Native Merchants passed through a great concourse of people of all castes to the Dock Head

\* He was a member of the Bombay Council from 10-7-1808 to 23-7-1811.

where he was saluted by three cheers from a multitude assembled to bid him farewell and as soon as he reached the *Caroline*, she immediately got under weigh. We have received with peculiar satisfaction the numerous tributes of respects, esteem and affection which have marked the retirement of Mr. Forbes. They speak better than any language we can employ, the deep and generous sense which is entertained of his value as a merchant, a friend and a man. His commercial integrity and liberality, his active kindness and unwearied charity have been too fully displayed during a long course of more than 22 years to need our public praise. This honourable course has been closed and crowned by parting acts of bounty which it is not too extravagant to call princely. Mr. Forbes, we understand, at his departure bestowed nearly a lac of rupees and it is no little praise to say that his liberality has been as discriminating as it has been great, for it has without exception been conferred on such only as were truly the objects of charity or were persons deserving of substantial token of his regard."

The ship *Caroline* reached London on 27th April 1812. Even when Forbes was on the boat, he began correspondence with his friends at Bombay. This correspondence only ended with his death. Among his friends in India his broker Hormarjee Bomanjee was his chief and particular friend, though it appears that he was also in close touch with Hormarjee's elder brothers. Unfortunately, with the exception of his letters to Hormarjee, and after the latter's death in 1826 to his son Bomanjee Hormarjee, others cannot be traced. Fortunately the letters which are preserved are of great interest, for a number of topics relating to India and Indians are discussed therein.



SIR CHARLES FORBES, 1st BART.

From a Portrait in the possession of Messrs. Forbes Forbes Campbell & Co., L



## MEMBERSHIP OF PARLIAMENT

On returning to England he was elected Member of Parliament for the Borough of Beverley and represented that place from 1812 to 1818. In the latter year he was returned for Malmesbury and continued to represent that town till the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832.\*

## REGARDS FOR FRIENDS

Even after his retirement from India he continued to take a great interest in his friends which can be seen from the letters he addressed to them.

In his letter to his partner, William Taylor Money, who on retiring from the post of the Superintendent of Marine in 1811 had joined the firm of Forbes and Co. as a partner, Forbes writes regarding the high opinion he held of Hormarjee :—

"I value him for his liberal and generous spirit, for his principles of honour and for his devoted attachment to you and the interest of the House; added to all these he has an excellent judgment and I am happy to consult him on all occasions," and this high opinion of Hormarjee, Forbes held to the last.

At so early a date as 21st September 1812 he wrote "I assure you that the more I see of this country the more do I like Bombay and wish myself there again."\*\* I believe in this respect I am not singular and that most Indians prefer the Warmth of the East to the Cold of the West in more respects than in point of climate. I am told, however, I shall get myself reconciled by and by. If not, I may take

\* Dictionary of National Biography Vol. XIX, pp. 185-186.

\*\* Eighteen years later he declared in the House of Commons on 4th May 1830 :—"after an experience of 22 years in India & 17 years here, the more I see of my own countrymen, the more I like the Natives of India."

it into my head to pay you a visit one of these days and if I do come I shall settle myself down as Pestonjee's\*\* neighbour at Lowjee Castle and live the life of a country gentleman occasionally travelling about to see you and my other friends and pick up the news," and he ends the letter with this sentence "Remember me to my worthy friend Jamsetjee, to Pestonjee, to Nusserwanjee and all the young members of the family and give my compliments to Cowasjee Patell's family, Hirji Jivan's, Nemchand, Madhav Bhuvan, Jamsetjee Nanabhoy, etc. etc., in short all those whom you know I wish well, for I am sure I do not wish otherwise to anyone in Bombay, European or Native, great or small."

Forbes had made it a point not merely to give letters of introduction to a number of his European acquaintances to Hormarjee, but in many instances he helped young men to settle down either in trade or in the Merchant Navy as petty officers.

In his letter dated 28th December 1813 in introducing one George Mackintosh he writes: "He must be provided for. I need not point out to you how this is to be effected. How you and I, my friend, have done many things of the same kind for men of merit whom we wished to serve and upon whom fortune has so often smiled, when we have taken them by the hand after having laboured under her frowns for many years."

He was always anxious to give a helping hand to the young and the fallen as the following letter of 4th November 1816, regarding one Horatio Robert Nelson will

\*\* Forbes refers to the residence of Pestonjee Bomanjee Wadia (the elder brother of Hormarjee) who had built a palatial country house at Parel in 1792 known as Lalbag,—now the J. N. Petit Parson Boys' Orphanage which is one of the few old landmarks of Bombay of the 18th. Century left on the Island.

show: "His connections are good yet he has unfortunately lost their protection. It does not appear that his errors have been of a nature to justify them in withdrawing from him all assistance and since he has suffered smartly I hope he will conduct himself in future with more steadiness and propriety."

He not only gave a push in life to many but even helped them with money as the following letter dated 21-2-1821 shows: "This will be delivered by Mr. Forbes.\* . . . Remember I put him under your special care and protection. In the words of our friend Mr. Sutherland, 'when Hormarjee takes a man by the hand he does not easily let him go and when he does, it must be the man's own fault' and I agreed with him . . . . I have given him a credit of Rs. 500 on the House in case of necessity." There are other similar letters addressed to Hormarjee.

### CHAMPION OF LIBERTY

When James Silk Buckingham, the Editor and Proprietor of the *Calcutta Herald* was deprived of his freedom, his property was confiscated by the Bengal Government and he was deported to England for his criticism of the policy of the Government and for his independent views, it naturally aroused the sympathy of many. The matter was brought up in Parliament in June 1824 when Mr. Buckingham's petition was presented. On the 8th June the matter was discussed and Forbes expressed his views in a speech on the attitude of the Bengal Government. He stated that he had no hesitation in saying that it was indeed too true that the Government in India were apt to look with considerable jealousy at any public dis-

\* A friend of Sir C. Forbes.

cussion of their own acts. They considered it the height of arrogance and presumption in any person to dare to comment on what they thought proper to do. He then referred to the question of deportation and gave an instance how that power was threatened to be used by the Bombay Government. The extraordinary power of deportation, Mr. Forbes stated, was what he most complained of. And yet it was too frequently held out as a menace not only to the British residents but to the natives of the country living under British Law. He had known a native merchant menaced with deportation for no other fault than that of having made a beneficial bargain with the Government of Bombay and having refused to abandon his interest at the mandate of the Government with a spirit worthy of a man who valued the security of British Law, and the native of Bombay addressed himself to the Government in these words: "I have been threatened without offence with being sent away from this Island. That such an order is untrue, I believe, for I know it is inconsistent with the rights of Englishmen and the laws under which you govern." One word more on the power of deportation. That power was originally gained with a view to preventing undesirable persons from getting into the interior of India and tampering with the natives. He earnestly desired that some measures be taken to protect the people of India both British and Indian from the state of insecurity at variance with every principle of British Law.

It is now a century and a quarter since the words were uttered, but the same position unfortunately continues.

#### HELP TO BUCKINGHAM

On his return to England Mr. Buckingham started to publish the *Oriental Herald*, but his financial condition

was so unsatisfactory that Henry Brougham, Joseph Hume and several other members of Parliament made an appeal to the public to relieve him from his distressed condition. The list of subscribers includes the names of several Directors of the E. I. Co. as the Hon'ble Douglas Kennaird, Leicester Stanhope and J. C. Hobhouse.

John Stewart, a partner of Forbes & Co., London forwarded this appeal to Hormarjee with his letter dated 3-4-1826 which runs as under: "In consequence of the shamefully oppressive conduct of the E. I. Co. towards Mr. Buckingham, it became necessary for the friends of India in this country to step forward to his relief and to prevent his being utterly ruined and sent to jail,—an event which his oppressors would have rejoiced at as by putting a stop to the *Oriental Herald*, which had so successfully and ably exposed the malpractices of the Court of Directors and the Indian Government, it would have left them at full liberty to pursue their system of misrule with scarcely a voice in this country that could be effectually raised against it. Of the great good which the *Herald* is working for India, you are, I have no doubt by this time, fully aware—and it is the duty of everyone who takes an interest in the welfare of the natives of India to uphold and encourage a publication through which just grievances may be brought to the notice of the authorities in this country and which has already been the means of drawing attention to many abuses which have hitherto been practised with impunity in the East. All this has naturally exposed Mr. Buckingham to the enmity of the Court and who consequently persists in withholding from him that remuneration to which he is on every principle of justice and common sense entitled for the arbitrary destruction of his property by the Bengal Government and

by which he has been reduced from affluence to poverty. But I need not enter into further particulars here as you will find them in the *Herald* and which sufficiently explains the hardship of that case. It was, however, necessary to afford Mr. Buckingham some pecuniary aid as the whole of his own property has been destroyed by the Bengal Government, and without such assistance he would not have had the means of continuing the *Oriental Herald*, and the friends of those principles which that work so ably advocates, have accordingly subscribed a considerable sum which will enable Mr. Buckingham to continue his labours for the good of India, and our mutual friend, Sir Charles Forbes, has subscribed £500 for his native friends at Bombay, a sum which I am sure you will find no difficulty in raising and Sir Charles and myself have drawn a bill on you for the amount."

In the subscription list opened by Sir Charles in London, a sum of £3,075 was subscribed in the first instance. In this list of subscribers we find the names of Sir Alexander Johnstone (late Chief Justice of Ceylon) and several others. Against the sum of £500 subscribed by Sir Charles in the name of his Bombay friends, they actually subscribed £630 as under:

Bomanjee Hormarjee Wadia	£ 125
Dadabhoy Pestonjee Wadia	.. 50
Cursetjee Manekjee	.. 100
Hormarjee Bhikajee	.. 100
Jamsetjee Jijibhoy	.. 35
Dhakjee Dadajee	.. 50
Motichand Amichand	.. 60
Mohomedally Rogay	.. 15
Sundry Collections	.. 95
Total	£ 630

### HELP TO OTHERS

This was not the only instance in which Forbes without the consent of his native friends subscribed money. How great was his confidence in his friends can be noticed from the following:

The well-known English House, Bruce Simson & Co., which had very intimate business connections with Pestonjee Bomanjee were in financial difficulties in 1815-16 and were forced to suspend payment. If, however, a sum of £1,00,000 could be advanced, the reputation of the firm could be saved. Their friends in London after due consideration resolved to advance this sum by subscribing the whole amount amongst themselves. In this list Forbes himself subscribed £10,000 and subscribed a similar sum in the names of his friends Pestonjee and Hormarjee Bomanjee Wadia without obtaining their previous consent: He thereafter wrote to them informing them of what he had done. From his letter of 18th July 1816 addressed to his two friends the following lines are quoted :

"This misfortune has excited universal concern here, where they have both been long and universally respected and from the esteem and respect with which I always heard their characters mentioned at Bombay I am persuaded that the regret felt here cannot exceed what will be experienced among their old friends there. You, Pestonjee, in particular will be much affected when you hear of their calamity, for you were united with them in interest and esteem by no common obligations, and Hormarjee, though not so connected with them as you were, will nevertheless lament that any distress should befall those who were always held in high estimation at Bombay and who were his brother's particular friends.....Among the subscribers to this noble act you will be gratified to

observe your own names. We all, that is, all those who know the virtue of your esteemable characters, who have had experience of the liberality of your dispositions, were convinced that you will not only be happy to see your names united with those of the friends you most respect for so good and so generous an object, but you will be most grateful to those who undertook to answer for your wishes on the occasion. Indeed we may regard it as a high and a just compliment paid to the Parsi character by those who have ever held it up to their own countrymen as an example most honourable to you and which they may well be proud to imitate.

"For myself I cannot help rejoicing at an arrangement which serves to place Pestoujee and Hormarjee Bomanjee on that eminence of character in the city of London which they have maintained with so much distinction during their well spent lives on their native Island of Bombay."

In a separate letter to Pestonjee and Hormarjee, Mr. J. Forbes Mitchell, a partner of Forbes & Co., wrote:

"You will both delight to share this honourable effort in common with your very worthy friends—and Pestoujee will have the comfort to find that he has been enabled in their (Bruce & Simson's) hour of trial to help and show honour to men with whom he was so long affectionately connected and in whose hearts he has certainly always been most kindly remembered—I was witness to the deep emotion with which Mr. Bruce and Mr. Simson received the offer of Mr. C. Forbes to join the names of Pestonjee and Hormarjee in this good work and all have reason to be proud of it ..... Your aid will contribute to preserve the means of comfort to the declining years of your early friends, and the most generous and disinterested efforts ever made in the great capital of the commer-



Born 31-1-1808

Bomanji Hormasji Wadia

Died 3-7-



cial world will evince the unbounded confidence due to the friendship of Pestonjee and Hormarjee Bomanjee."

In a post-script it is stated that the amount of £10,000 was drawn by a bill.

As is always the case, a person who is honest and straight in his dealings with others appreciates the same in others and so we find Forbes writing appreciatively to Pestonjee regarding the latter's conduct towards the House of Smith Rickards & Co., as follows: "I feel obliged to you, my friend Pestonjee, for the manly, handsome and friendly part you have acted towards them, at a time too when others of whom more might have been expected pursued a very different and far less liberal part. Yourself and Hormarjee in that instance behaved as you always do, like gentlemen and as might have been expected from you."

### VIEWS ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The time of the arrival of Mr. Forbes in England on his retirement from India synchronised with the time of the renewal of the Company's Charter and this engaged his entire attention. He threw his whole weight and influence for the betterment of Indians.

### TRADE AND SHIPPING

The following quotation from his letter to Hormarjee dated 14-3-1813, regarding the Company's trade, shipping, want of interest in Indian affairs in the House of Commons, etc. will speak for itself: "We are all in a bustle about the Charter and Indian Shipping—you will easily guess what part I take—my object is to get the Company out of India as Merchants all together. Let them be sovereigns in India and merchants in China. This would be better for the Company themselves than the present system

and of course better for their subjects in India who would then be left free to do their best in their transactions with the private merchants. The Company have lost all the profits of their China trade by the India trade and a great deal more as will be shown in Parliament. Rickards has taken a great deal of pains in laying open the true state of their affairs..... You have nobody here who seems to take any trouble or concern about you. I do all I can but am badly supported. The India Agents have joined with the Directors against the King's Ministers to keep the trade to the Port of London but will not succeed, and the Agents will hurt themselves and perhaps the owners of Indian Shipping by this conduct. Lord Buckinghamshire (President of the Board of Control) told me the other day that he thought that the Agents were standing in their own light and might have acted more wisely by supporting the Ministry who had on all occasions befriended the merchants and shipping of India as far as possible in their disputes with the Directors. I could not help telling His Lordship that I perfectly agreed with him but hoped he would still keep in mind the interest of our absent friends in the East and not punish the innocent with the guilty. We then entered pretty fully upon the question of Indian Shipping..... I am clearly of opinion that it is absolutely necessary for the very existence of country shipping that they should have the sole carrying trade from Port to Port in India and that I hope and believe will be the case..... There is a great jealousy against the admission of Indian Shipping to a participation in the West India carrying trade of this country..... You may be assured, however, that I will do all I can for India and Bombay in particular, but I again say I have no voice

nee. I have had several rows with Poreher, Wilkinson, Simson and others and told them my mind plainly. They have not even sent in to Parliament a Petition in favour of Indian Shipping although there are fifty against it but I hope they will at last do this. . . . I will act and vote as my conscience tells I ought in this and everything else of a public nature without minding whom it may please or displease."

In another letter of 17-4-1813 Forbes wrote: "We are doing all we can for Indian Shipping. . . . and you may believe Rickards and myself will not relax in that or any other respect connected with the welfare of India and the happiness and prosperity of her inhabitants. . . . But it is a hard battle to do anything against the Court of Directors who have so many people to support them against truth and justice from interested motives. I shall do my duty however, and not mind their displeasure for I set them at defiance as to any harm they could do to me or the House at Bombay; and at all events I am not, I hope, one of those who forget what has been passing during the last twenty years and are acting inconsistently with all their former acts and professions merely to serve their own private interests. . . . The Directors say that I am acting from interested motives in wishing to get all the agency of the private trade. But all who know Bombay must know the contrary and that I am acting against my own interests and those with whom I am connected in this country and in India in trade or in Company's shipping. . . . I have all along held that the trade of India will never thrive until the Company gave up one character or the other—that of sovereign or merchant. . . . Lord Buckinghamshire has assured me that the Company shall be obliged to receive their revenue

in cash and leave the market for cotton open. The weavers will also be left at entire liberty to work for whom they please without being imprisoned or flogged, which I believe there is no doubt of, although I have not yet been able to bring it out in my cross-examination of the Company's witnesses.....Rickards insists that all the Natives pay too much revenue and taxes and that they must always continue poor whilst the present system is in force."

In his letter dated 8-6-1813, Forbes writes about the debate that took place in the Commons and states:

"I took my share in the debates to the no small annoyance of Charles Grant and other Directors who told Rickards and me that we owed everything we had 'even our seats in Parliament to the Company against whom we now appeared as enemies'. I gave him a complete answer acknowledging my obligations as a British Merchant for that protection which every subject had a right to expect from the British Government but that I have got nothing they could keep from me—I had only shared in that part of the trade the Company could not themselves be engrossed in and then I gave the other side of the account. Our assistance to Government during the Maratha Wars etc. etc. I also gave the history of the *Caroline*, went into the cotton business to the Northward and other points to the amusement and surprise of our friends and the annoyance of our enemies."

And again he wrote:

"I am happy to say that the interests of the British Empire in the East are daily more and more forcing themselves into notice and must soon come under the consideration of Parliament where we had lately had some very interesting discussions upon Indian affairs, although hardly

reported in the public papers. I must do the Court of Directors the justice to say that I believe them well disposed to do all in their power to ameliorate the condition of the native population, consistently with the views upon which they have so long been accustomed to act, and dreading as they do every innovation upon their system. But unfortunately that system is radically objectionable and it is to be regretted that they are apt to consider any interference with their measures as springing from factious or interested motives, which sometimes give rise to acrimonious discussion, even with their friends. For my part, in my humble endeavours occasionally to do good or to prevent evil, I have been influenced by no such motives nor any hostile feeling towards the Company Government. On the contrary, I should be sorry to see it set aside and that of the King's Ministers substituted. I hope and believe no such measure is in contemplation. But very material alterations and reforms are necessary; and I continue to think, as I have always done, that the first great and indispensable step towards the improvement in India will be to separate the political from the commercial character of the Company in India. The duties of the Sovereign and the Merchant must clash—and the interests of the subjects must suffer. Let the Company wholly abandon commercial concerns *not only to and from India but in it inclusive of the monopolies of salt and opium—both great evils to the country.* Let them draw a fair and moderate revenue and let them retain the exclusive trade in teas to the United Kingdom, throwing everything else free. These were my sentiments in 1813 and they are the same now. The plan, if acted upon, would lay the foundation of great improvement in India. Of course other subjects of vast importance remain to be considered—the land

revenue—the administration of justice and though last not least, a system under which the natives should be admitted to a fair participation with Europeans in the honours and advantages of serving the state.

"But we want men of ability, industry and independence to watch the progress of the great cause and to advocate the rights of the natives. . . . Whilst I have a voice in the Committee (of the Commons) it shall always be raised in favour of the natives. Of this I am very sure that the more the natives are known the more they will be respected and the higher they will rise in public estimation, compared with Europeans in every point of view. . . . . I speak from long experience of the natives of Bombay and can never repay what I owe to them for their unremitting great kindness to me. Indeed I often wish myself back amongst them, were it only that I might be enabled to evince in a more direct manner these my sincere and grateful feelings. They may be assured, however, that I never lose an opportunity of doing so in this country in public or in private, when called upon to express my sentiments."

Indeed no Indian could have pleaded more earnestly, enthusiastically or sincerely the cause of India than Charles Forbes.

#### OPPOSITION TO SENDING OUT OF MISSIONARIES TO INDIA

In the same letter, he expresses his views on the question of sending out missionaries:

"I opposed the Padrees being sent out to India, not that they would alarm you or my other friends in Bombay who have never thought that our Government would in-

terfere with their religion—that is not intended—but the ignorant part of the population would perhaps think otherwise and if the idea of converting the natives should once get into circulation there is no saying what uneasiness it might create throughout India generally. . . . T' measure is merely to please the religiously mad part of t people of this country who are determined to send you ou some more Padrees who will, I am sure be only laughed at by all the sensible natives. . . . . The otlier night I opposed the first proposition in the Commons but all the Saints were against us and the Ministry begged that it might not be discussed at that time—3 o'clock in the morning."

And twenty-five years later, in the course of the East India debate in March 1838 he expressed his conviction on the same subject in a forceful speech.

"He had no objection to their (missionaries) going out as school masters, but if they were allowed to preach and abuse the religion of the natives they would do more harm than good and in point of fact would be beginning at the wrong end. Let the natives be instructed generally, but in matter of faith leave them to judge for themselves; . . . . He would never give his support to any measure having for its object to force the natives of India to abandon their own religion and embrace another faith for which they were not prepared."

Though a son of a clergymen his Indian friends had complete confidence in him. In the first few decades of the last century Indian parents were hesitating to send their sons for education to England on account of the activities of some missionaries. In 1838 the then Master Builder of the Government Dockyard, Nowrojee Jamset-

jee Wadia, was persuaded to send his son and his nephew\* to England for receiving special training in the art of ship-building. He was ultimately prevailed upon to do so, mainly due to the presence of Sir Charles Forbes in England. In his letter to him Nowrojee wrote:—“My entreaties both as a parent and as a Parsee are so strong and unequivocal that no inducement, I assure you could prevail upon me to sanction their departure save the conviction that their religious sentiments, whilst under your auspices, would be preserved from the interference of strangers, and the assurance that you would occasionally condescend to make inquiries respecting the progress of their education and general conduct, would be a source of inexpressible satisfaction and is comparatively the only consideration that would compensate for their absence in a far distant country.”

### VIEWS ON INDENTURE LABOUR, OPIUM AND OTHER QUESTIONS

Forbes held very strong views on the question of Indenture labour, the trade in opium and other questions affecting the well-being of Indians and Asiatics.

The following extracts from his speeches in 1837 will speak for themselves:

“As to the title of the Bill which was ‘for the protection of the natives of India’ it sounded very well, but, you would ask where was the necessity of protecting the natives of India, if the project about to be set on foot

\* They were Jehangeer Nowrojee Wadia and Hirjibhoy Mervani Wadia. They left Bombay in 1838 and returned in 1841. The former subsequently became Master Builder in 1857, and died in Liverpool in 1866. The latter was 1st Builder and died in 1882. Just before they left England, they had published a book about their stay in England and the same was dedicated to Sir Charles Forbes.



*John Forbes*

John Forbes, Eldest son of Sir Charles Forbes, 1st Bart: Died December 184



was a just one. Protect the natives of India indeed! Yes, they ought to protect them against such a nefarious measure as this. . . . He had a high authority, that of Lord Brougham, for viewing this measure as the commencement of a slave-trade between Asia and the West Indies. The slave-trade in Africa originated in the conveyance of black-men to the West Indies, under the pretence of employing them there as free labourers; yet from the moment of their arrival there they were made slaves and treated accordingly. Hence arose the infamous traffic which had disgraced this country and all civilised Europe for many many years. Looking at that fact they ought immediately to discourage this proposed plan which would only open the door to a new species of slave trade. They were told that this was 'An Act for the Protection of Natives of Her Majesty's territories in the East Indies contracting for labour to be performed without the said territories and for regulating their passage by sea'. Who, he would ask, were these poor people who were supposed to be able to 'contract'? He denied that 'Hill-Coolies' as they were called (he certainly had never heard that denomination before) were able in point of intellect to enter into contracts with the West Indies planters, who wished by enticing them to make up for the loss of slave labour consequent on the operation of the Emancipation Act. How were they to judge of what they would be called on to do? Did they understand the meaning of the contract? Could they read or write? They might make their mark: not one in ten thousand of them do more. These forsooth were the people who were to consider and subscribe contracts drawn up by crafty lawyers. They would be lured by the offer of a little money to go to a distant land which was described to them as a paradise flowing with milk and

honey. Many of them had been already sent to Mauritius and during the passage scores of them died in consequence of the crowded state of the vessels in which they were conveyed. One half of those whom it was now contemplated to send out would perish in proceeding to Guiana and the West Indies, and the moiety would, he was sure, pass their lives in hopeless slavery. As to the idea of their ever returning to their native country, it was a mere fallacy. This Bill, by which ignorant men might be bound over for five years of slavery (so he would call it, for in that it must end) which contract might also be renewed, was, he repeated, a most disgraceful measure to all who were concerned wth it and he trusted that it would never be allowed to pass into a law. By acceding to such a criminal measure, they would be giving a sanction to a new slave-trade. He would tell them that if the natives of India could be made to understand the nature and policy of this free labour system amongst them they would not be cajoled to countenance it by specious offers. He would say again that, disgnise it as they might, it would be nothing more nor less than the beginning of an abominable and disgraceful slave-trade. . . . He suggested that the Court of Directors should petition both the Houses of Parliament praying that this Bill may not be allowed to pass into a law but they should take such measures as they might deem proper to discourage the natives in every part of India from being led away by delusive offers of this nature which could only terminate in death or slavery. He believed that at this moment there were not less than eight or ten thousand of these poor people working as slaves or worse than slaves in Mauritius, and he understood that the adviees from that Colony with respect to their situation were most unsatisfactory. . . . . What protection

did this measure afford to those wretched people who might be induced to abandon their native country? Absolutely none that could be effectual. .... If it were declared that £100 should be lodged in the treasury at Calcutta for every native shipped to West Indies, let that be done and it would afford an effectual protection to the natives of India. He believed that the Court had that power. They could hardly deny that they possessed it, for, if they had it not, why should they interfere with a gentleman bringing a servant from India? Let them answer that question, he paused for a reply. But no reply could be given in the negative. The Court possessed that power and they ought to use it for the protection of the natives. Perhaps it might be said that these men were of a different race and the Court ought to be very cautious how they interfered. That, he considered as a mere subterfuge; and he would say again 'give to these poor Hill-Coolies (slaves as they otherwise must become) the same protection as you vouchsafe to other natives when they are induced to leave their native country and to serve individuals elsewhere and I will consent to this measure'."

And again in a debate in 1838 Sir Charles opposed the proposal for emigration in a forceful speech: "He could not view it in any other light than as a Bill for the Extension of Slavery..... If they looked into the provisions of the Bill it would be found that these poor wretches were to be deprived of their civil rights. They were not to be allowed to contract debts; and they were thrown on the mercy of their employers to provide for them even those necessaries which they might absolutely require. They were allowed to enter into a contract in ten days after the former contract had expired. But the consequence of this would be that in most cases the con-

tract would be renewed until the death of the individual took place. He conceived that it would be extremely wrong to place any confidence in the parties to whom these Hill-Coolies were consigned. It was their interest to extract from them as much labour as they could, at the least possible expense. He saw no necessity whatever for encouraging the emigration of their Indian subjects. Instead of shipping them to the West Indies, it would be much better for the Government to devise the means of employing them at home; and it is well known that there were millions of acres of land uncultivated in India which were capable of producing grain, sugar and other commodities. Why were the people of India represented as favourable to this system? Why, it was the grinding system of rack-rents, and badly paid labour that forced the natives to accede to it. All the servants of the E. I. Co. concur in the opinion, that in respect to the natives they are in a worse state now than they were a century ago."

Who can say that Forbes had not correctly judged the situation and intuitively foreseen the consequences of that policy?

His views on the question of employment of Indian Laskars also deserve notice. Owing to the shipping laws of that time Indian laskars were not allowed to be employed on ships on their return voyage from England. Sir Charles all along fought for their rights. He rightly pointed out the grave injustice of such a law when it did not apply to the native seamen of the West Indies. He considered this to be a gross violation of the equality of rights. In a speech at a meeting of the Court of Directors on 31-7-1840, he once again referred to this point and said: "I can see no reason why the natives of the East Indies living under British Government should be prohibited from

those rights that were enjoyed by other British subjects. The interests of that great country were borne down by the West Indies interest, by the shipping interest, in short by every interest that could be brought to bear against it."

### CHAMPION OF FAIR COMMERCIAL DEAL TO INDIA

On the general commercial and economic policy of Great Britain towards India, he always held views favourable to India. In a speech at a meeting of the Court in 1822, he stated :

"The whole course of legislative measures with regard to India had been extremely unfair, unjust and oppressive towards the population of that country. I will be sorry to predict anything unpleasant but it appears to me contrary to human reason and human nature to suppose that men who were becoming every day more and more enlightened should remain quiet and submissive under such severe injuries."

In a speech on East India Debate in 1822, he again stated :—

"Let us advert to a topic which is apparently becoming so much a favourable one with the public that what I shall say upon it may not, to many, be gratifying..... It is the increased exportation of British cotton manufactures to India. India was in the habit for very many years of supplying this country with its cotton fabrics: fabrics celebrated through the world for a long series of years. Our own cotton manufactures with the astonishing advantage of machinery rose into rivalry with those of India, and by the imposition of high duties on the use of the latter in the United Kingdom we have effected nearly the exclusion of them from our markets. But this

is not all; such are the advantages of machinery and the ingenuity of our artisans in imitating the fashions of India that we begin at length to supplant the fabries of India at their own doors and for the consumption of their own people. They are not only deprived of our foreign market which enriched them, but undersold in their own. What an affecting change for them! But this is a state of things to which they are subjected by the dependency of India upon Britain. *If India were a separate State, governed by an independent ruler, it would not submit to this inequality. It would establish protecting or counterbalancing duties on behalf of the manufactures of its own territories.* That which could be a duty of India's independent ruler devolved upon us; we are the sovereigns of India and should shield our Indian subjects as far as we can from the oppression of partiality towards other interests. I regard this consideration as fundamental in respect to the present point and to every point which is now before this Court. Another of this point is the higher duty imposed upon East Indian sugar compared with that of the West Indies. I deeply lament the present condition of the West Indies. I wish it were possible to ameliorate it; but I cannot think one class of subjects should be taxed in order to relieve another. What should we say if it were proposed to alleviate the distress of the agriculturists in this country at the expense of the commercial class, who are represented to be flourishing. Would the proposal be listened to? Would not the sense of the country be manifested against its injustice? Yet the case is here exactly the same. The trade of the East Indies is to be depressed in order to favour that of the West Indies, both countries being dependencies of the same Empire and both entitled to its protection. You will therefore perceive

fabries without allowing them to protect their own cotton manufactures in their own markets; and you do not permit them to repay your fabries with their own sugar, because you choose to give West Indies sugar a preference in your markets; and therefore impose heavier duties on those of the East. Here is no reciprocity; the natives of India are thus met in both ways and all reciprocity is denied to them. Something of the same nature now takes place with regard to the Indian ships. I well remember that in the year 1813 when the last Charter Act was passed, it was contended on the part of India by others and myself that as India-built ships were not admitted to the free navigation of England, *the coasting trade of India ought to be secured to the natives and should not be interfered with by British-built ships.* Lord Castlereagh at the time distinctly declared in the Commons that no such interference was contemplated or intended. I then thought this point secured trusting that the words of the Act would conform to the professed meaning and the coasting trade would not be trench'd upon; but now after what has appeared in this business I think it not safe to place reliance upon the mere declared intention of an Act, so it seems lawyers have discovered that the Act to which allude is susceptible of a different meaning from what was first thought to be its plain import. In fact, it now appears that the Act notwithstanding its provisions is construed to convey a fair and equitable right to British built ships to enter into the coasting trade of India which must necessarily overwhelm the Indian coasters now engaged in that trade so that the case of the merchants of India stands thus: They were encouraged by the growth of the coasting trade to turn their attention to ship building, they have greatly increased it and now all a-

once after having long embarked in this trade they are to be overwhelmed by the introduction of the British ships empowered to range wherever they please along the shores of India. It is hence clear that the interest of one body at home so placed as to command attention and influence the acts of Government may by persevering clamours obtain the sacrifice of other interests not possessed of equal resources for the defence."

In a speech on the East India debate on 15-4-1833 Sir Charles said :

"What had been the effect of the opening of the trade in 1813? The manufacturers of England had certainly been kept in work, but how was their work disposed of? Why, it was sent out to India and sold under prime cost. But mark the effects in India. Our inundating that country with our cotton goods had beggared thousands of our peaceable and industrious subjects in that country. And have you shown any reciprocity or good feeling in our commercial system? No, instead of treating them as British subjects and affording them every facility of introducing the produce of that country into England, we have loaded their exports, their sugars, etc. with prohibitory taxes and persisted in draining that country of their precious metals. Was this the way to attach the natives of India to the parent country?"

And again at a special meeting held on 6-5-1833 Sir Charles stated :

"However that might be, he would again say, that the E. I. Co. were morally bound to protect the interests of the people of India and to take those measures which finally they must take, and the sooner the better, to the effect that they would no longer be trifled with; otherwise there



Born 1766

Hormasji Boma



might rest assured no relief would be granted to the East Indies. He most strenuously advised the sending out of a despatch directing the Govt. of India to lay on such countervailing duties as would force the question fairly before Parliament, on the ground of reciprocity. . . . This he admitted was a course exceedingly to be deprecated, if it could be at all avoided; but he felt that the first obligation of the Company was to watch over and advance by every possible means the welfare and happiness of the people of India. There was also a very large pecuniary interest connected with this question and when they looked at what had been done for the West Indies, it would be well to recollect that from four to five millions must be annually drawn from India to whose people no relief had been extended; indeed, looking to all the expenses to which India was subject the discharge of part of the 6 per cent loan, the payment of the dividends to the Proprietors of £6,30,000, and the total annual drain from India could be little short of five million sterlings. How could they expect to supply the home treasury from India, when they destroyed her manufactures and refused to receive the produce of her soil, while they were, in fact, plundering the people of India day after day and year after year to an extent horrible to be contemplated. In fifty years they had exacted from India more than would be sufficient to pay off the national debt, as shown by a calculation made by Mr. Montgomery Martin. *The European party both here and in India took good care of themselves but the people of India were left to shift as they could.* He hoped, however, that the day was approaching when the latter would be able to take care of themselves and to compel those to do them justice who now refused to attend to their complaints."

"The sooner therefore the Executive body did their duty and prepared a despatch to the Bengal Government directing them to lay countervailing duties equal to those which this country imposes upon the produce and manufactures of India, the sooner would they obtain redress from the British Government. By taking this step they would rouse the manufacturing interest of this country and they would also call up the mercantile interest with their respective representatives in Parliament on the subject. The manufacturing interest would, of course, complain of the new duty and they would request that measures should be taken to remove them: but what would be the natural answer to their application on the part of those who supported the interest of India? Why, they would say, 'Undoubtedly we have out-housed (*sic*) the increased duties but let us have fair play: if you will remove the duties imposed on East India produce and manufacture, we will remove the duties on goods sent out to India from this country.' If they adopted that bold course they would have a power arrayed in the House of Commons in favour of the interests of India which unfortunately they did not now possess. India was not represented in the House of Commons. *There were but two or three individuals in the House who cared anything about India.* Beyond those few individuals where was the man who noted what was going on in India? Indeed India was scarcely ever mentioned except perhaps to ask a question about hanging a nabab, or something of that kind, which he did not mean to touch on now, although he might be allowed to express a hope that no more exhibition of such a nature would take place. No interest was taken in the House of Commons with reference to the Indian subject."

What they wanted was, that India should be represented and supported with such power as the great agitator of Ireland wielded on behalf of that country. That was the man they wanted for India. Such, he repeated, was the man India wanted; and he only wished they could enlist in her cause a man with such power, such perseverance, and such talents, for then they might hope to wrestle with the Government, and successfully to oppose those whose private interests were arrayed against the prosperity of the people of India. He expressed himself warmly on this subject because perhaps it was the last time that he should address the Court with reference to it. He was so disgusted with the conduct of Government in relation to the question that he should probably in future decline taking any part in its discussion. He, however, would recommend, as he had before done when the subject was under consideration, though his recommendation was not attended to, that they should follow the example of the Native and European inhabitants of Bombay, (he said the Native and European inhabitants, because he thought the Native should take precedence) and send a copy of this petition to the House of Lords as well as to the House of Commons."

#### SIR CHARLES' MUNIFICENCE

Sir Charles was always anxious to extend a helping hand to all deserving of support, whether it was an individual or an institution, but his acts were unostentatious and arose out of sheer goodness of heart.

When Lt. John Hayes (afterward Sir John Hayes 1767-1831) who was prominently connected with the surveys of different seas, did not return to Bombay in time and as no reports from or concerning him were received by

Government, the latter stopped payments to his wife which were authorised by the husband to be paid to her. This reduced the lady to great distress. Capt. C. R. Low in the *History of the Indian Navy* states:

"But there was a true friend in Bombay, who confident that the gallant officer would some day turn up personally, took to the sorrowing lady the monthly remittances as they became due. Mr. F..... lived to see his conviction verified, for the gallant Hayes sailed into Bombay one day and the Government and his friends—how many were there besides the good Bombay Merchant—regarded him almost as one who had risen from the dead. We need scarcely say that his first act was to repay the good Samaritan who had supported and befriended his wife during the long period of supposed widowhood."

Owing to a great famine in Gujarat, the citizens of Bombay had raised a fund to relieve the distress. When Forbes came to know about this, he wrote to Hormatjee under date 19-5-1813:

"I wish, my friend, you had put my name down for a thousand Rupees or two ..... I give you authority to put my name to anything of this kind you put your name to, and I shall acquaint the House accordingly, that they may pay on my account or you can debit me for it, as you think proper."

Again in 1837 when a great fire raged at Surat from 22nd to 25th April, several hundred lives were lost and three-fourths of the town was destroyed. The citizens of Bombay raised a public subscription and a sum of Rs 1,65,000 was collected. When the news reached Sir Charles, he wrote a letter to the *London Times* under the name of "An Old Bombayer" from which I shall quote:

two paragraphs showing his feelings towards the people of India.

“Great Britain has benefitted so much and so extensively by that noblest of her possessions, India, that the unhappy event cannot fail of exciting the benevolent feelings of the public generally but more especially of those immediately connected with that country, whether from commercial pursuits, or from a long residence amongst and grateful sense of obligation to, her people for the comforts they now enjoy in their own country.

“Appeals are always made, and never in vain to the generous feelings of the natives of India, on behalf of suffering humanity in Great Britain and even in aid of public institutions. I, therefore, trust that the ruin and misery in which thousands and tens of thousands of our Indian fellow subjects are involved by the destruction of nearly the whole of the extensive and popular city of Surat may induce a Christian public to come forward and assist in alleviating the distress of those unfortunate people who have thus so suddenly and so awfully been deprived of their homes, their property, and even the means of subsistence for their wives and children.”

In sending a cutting of the *Times* to his friend, Bomanjee Hormarjee, Sir Charles wrote:

“From my heart I sympathise with the poor people of Surat and I pray that God may pity and provide for them. But this is a cold country, Bomanjee, and I fear they have little to expect from it, even aided by the high sounding names of Clare and Elphinstone—if indeed they gave themselves any trouble about the matter. I understand that the Committee (i.e. the Bombay Committee) have written to those great men (in India—but in England no greater than their neighbours) and I hope they

may exert themselves for so good a cause but with that I have nothing to do, your letter being the only one I have received on the subject; and therefore I have great pleasure in making you the medium of conveying my own and my family's contribution to the liberal subscription raised by our native friends which does them great credit."

Sir Charles subscribed Rs. 2,000 to the fund.

### HIS VIEWS ON OPIUM

He was deadly opposed to the opium trade. He took every opportunity to express his views boldly and emphatically.

In a debate in June 1839 in the Court of Directors, he vehemently declared that that ill-gotten revenue ought to be given up and that ere long this disgraceful and abominable trade should be done away with.

When he came to know that Sir Henry Pottinger, who had led the expedition against China in the early forties of the last century as a result of which that unfortunate country was forced to open its doors for the opium trade, was presented with an Address and a Piece of Plate for his successes, he wrote to his friend, Bomanjee Hormajee, in his letter dated 7-10-1844:

"I am sorry I cannot concur with you in the eulogisms on Sir Henry Pottinger whose peace with China will, I think, prove a hollow one, when our Navy and Army are withdrawn from that unfortunate and ill-tempered country and their place supplied by hordes of opium-smugglers by sea and land. A Peace dictated at the mouth of the cannon and the point of the bayonet is consequently one-sided, having in it no reciprocity, no concessions to the feelings and interests of the Chinese, either politically or commercially. But you may depend

upon it that they will ultimately do themselves justice. I know not whether you have now anything to do with opium, but I would repeat to you the advice I have often given to your worthy father before you—*abstain from this cursed traffic, notwithstanding Sir Henry Pottinger's attempts to slur over its real evil in the sight of God and Man and for which you have given him a Picce of Platc.*"

It appears from a letter dated the 4th May 1843 addressed to his Firm and Bomanjee that a Captain of one of his ships did some trade in opium. This annoyed him so much that he wrote as under:

"Observing that Capt. Ayers has given way to bad example and *turned an opium-smuggler*, you will of course take care that he does not ship any of his *poison* in the LOWJEE. If he should attempt to do so, let him be superseded in her command. He cannot serve two masters and must take his choice between the Devil and the Lowjee Family. I cannot approve of Forbes and Co. being employed by Captain Ayers in the purchase of opium which I hope will not be repeated and that my friend Bomanjee will not give encouragement to the Captain and Officers of the LOWJEE to purchase that wild traffic of which I suspect the Bombay Bazar will have had enough by the time Ramlall's\* gambling claims are settled.

### INDIANS AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Having lived the best part of his life in close touch with Indians he appreciated their character and worth. He was always in favour of seeing Indians appointed as Jurymen and as Justices of the Peace. In a speech on 5th June 1829 in the House of Commons he said that he

\* Ramlall Thakorsidass was a well-known Marwari Merchant of Bombay.

wished to admit the natives of India to a participation of all civil rights belonging to British subjects and added that he had the good fortune to serve on Petty Juries with natives and he frequently felt more satisfaction in being associated with them upon such occasions than with his own countrymen. He wished to see the odious distinction between Natives and Europeans abolished.

In the following year he stated again in the Commons that after an experience of twenty-two years' residence in India the more he saw of his own countrymen, the more he liked the Natives of India.

### ABIDING INTEREST IN FRIENDS

How keen he was to uphold the reputation of his friends and of those who had business relations with him will be seen from the following:

One Premji Purshotam, a Hindu merchant of Bombay, had business connections with the firm of Forbes & Co. There were two Bills of about £1,500 drawn by this gentleman and were in the hands of another firm in London and they were not met on due dates. Forbes in view of his regard for Premji met those Bills and had them debited to the account of his Bombay firm and wrote, "My interference on this occasion arises from a two-fold motive, a regard for Premji's interest and our own. To allow these Bills to go back protested must injure Premji's credit and may be the forerunner of loss to ourselves. I do not hesitate to say that the former operates upon my mind more than the latter—for having so long known and esteemed Premji as an honourable, independent and wealthy merchant of Bombay and holding in great recollection what I owe to the kindness of the native merchants of Bombay I cannot look on with unconcern and ac-



*Geo Forbes*

Geo Forbes, third son of Sir Charles Forbes, 1st Bart.



his credit receive such a blow as would attend the returning of his Bills to India dishonoured. At the same time, reflecting upon the connection which has so long subsisted between us and Premji, the friendship and confidence which has been mutually manifested and the extensive concerns in trade with each other, I think it more than probable that we might suffer in a pecuniary point of view by the consequence of such a measure; and that it may be for our own interest to ward it off. Under these circumstances I did not hesitate in stepping forward to protect Premji's credit the moment I found it was in danger.....If any of the parties interested in this should think otherwise and be disposed to question what has been done, I shall without admitting their right to do so, subscribe to it myself."

One Captain Hamilton, when at Canton with his ship, had applied to the European agent of Forbes & Co. of that Port for funds to meet his immediate and urgent requirements but on the grounds of want of instructions, the agent, Mr. Meloney, refused to advance money with the result that the Captain had to advertise for the same. When this news reached Forbes he was much annoyed and wrote the following characteristic letter:

"Is this the advantage of European Agency there? Would a Native Agent of the House of Forbes and Hor-marjee have given such an answer to the Commander of a ship belonging to our best of friends, Mr. John Forbes, and in which myself and other friends—the former partners in the House—are likewise concerned? NO. I venture to say he would have come forward with the needful, even in the absence of your instructions, had' he been obliged to beg, borrow or steal it."

Whenever an attack was levelled on the character of Indians, Forbes was not the man to allow it to go unchallenged. He always defended them against such attacks with vehemence.

In 1839 the Bishop of London in a speech in the House of Lords attacked the character of Indians. Forbes would not allow such an attack to go unchallenged and he immediately contested the same by bearing witness to their character and habits. Upon this the Bishop came forward in the Press and wrote that he could only allow the views expressed by Sir Charles upon his speech the weight which could be given to a single witness. In short, the Bishop wanted to say that Sir Charles was prejudiced in favour of Indians. Thereupon one hundred and two prominent Englishmen who had passed a great part of their lives in India in different services got published a short letter\* in reply to the Bishop in which they stated:

"We the undersigned who have resided for many years in India consider it a duty which we owe to the Natives of that country to come forward and declare that we concur with Sir Charles Forbes in thinking that the statement of His Lordship is erroneous and that we deem Sir Charles entitled to the thanks of the Indian Community for his vindication of the Natives of India on this occasion".

### HIS OPTIMISM

Forbes was an optimist in all matters, great or small, in men or things, and his faith in Bombayites remained unshaken. In a letter dated the 20th April 1823, he wrote:—"You no doubt recollect our friend Capt. Colin Mackenzie, a worthy honest fellow and one of the

\* Jagat Premi, February 1850.

very few old friends whom I have never yet seen with a new face. His attachment to Bombay is as warm as ever and he would have as little objection as I should have to return to Bombay. Nor should we have any apprehension of finding it that altered place of which we hear so much, but for my own part I believe very little. A few good examples would soon make it what it used to be. You have now at all events got a liberal man at the head of your Government,\* it is said, and I shall look forward with confidence and pleasure to his calling forth those dormant qualities of the settlement which heretofore marked it so justly high in general estimation.

#### INTEREST IN THE WELFARE OF THE POOR

To the end of his eventful life, Sir Charles continued to take interest in the poor and the destitute of the Island of Bombay. There was a small fund which Sir Charles had earmarked for the benefit of his old servants who had served him when he was in Bombay. He wrote to his friends, Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy (subsequently, the First Baronet of that name) and Bomanjee Hormarjee, giving them directions to utilise the balance of the fund for the relief of the poor. In his letter to them of the 4th August, 1847, Sir Charles wrote:

“As to the remainder of the money, Bomanjee will exercise his own discretion, but I consider the Bombay Native Dispensary as an Institution highly worthy of support and I feel assured that you do so also. I am sorry it was not sooner brought to my notice, but it is not yet too late. I see that the Dispensary has been in praiseworthy operation for upwards of ten years, affording relief to more than 63,000 persons or upon an average 6,000

\* The new Governor referred to was Mount Stuart Elphinstone.

annually. It is my intention to contribute towards it Rs. 500 per annum during my life and a donation of Rs. 5,000 as arrears, which I shall request our mutual friend Mr. Bowman, one of the Members of the Committee, to arrange for being carried into effect and I shall be happy if I can in any other way promote the success of so excellent an Institution. Surely the Government ought not to discontinue its support to such a charity. I am sorry to learn that the allowance of Rs. 300 monthly was withdrawn in 1845 on Sir Jamsetjee's noble Hospital coming into operation. It would have been more creditable to the ruling authorities had they rather doubled than withdrawn that allowance, considering the extent of the Island and its great and increasing population now amounting, I am told, to nearly 4,00,000 souls. *The discontinuance of one of the Court's Dinners at the London Tavern would have more than covered the expence without reference to the taxation squeezed from the natives, for which little or no return is made to them.* London is said to contain two millions of inhabitants and has at least a hundred Hospitals, in proportion to which Bombay should have twenty instead of two."

In 1848 Sir Charles contributed a sum of Rupees thirty thousand to the District Benevolent Society, through his friend Sir Jamsetjee Jejeebhoy, Kt., (subsequently the first Baronet) which shows his large-heartedness and sympathy for the poor of this country and that too after an absence of 30 years from India.

#### PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS AND ERECTION OF STATUE

In 1839 his numerous friends and admirers resolved to present Sir Charles an Address and to erect his statue

to preserve his memory. The following paragraphs of the Address are worth reproducing:

"Twenty-seven years have now elapsed since you parted from us, but so vivid are all your recollections and so great is the interest you take in all that concerns India and the welfare and happiness of its inhabitants that it would seem almost as if you were still present amongst us, directly participating as you formerly did in all our anxious cares for the amelioration of our condition and the extension of our social privileges.

This feature of your character is as highly honourable to you as it is a rare and remarkable one; for our experience has fully shown us that but few men, however estimable, retain a recollection of their Eastern friends when they have returned to their native country; new connections, new friends, new ties break the links of their regard and if they do not forget us, they cease to take that warm interest in our affairs which we had hoped for and anticipated. To this common failing of humanity, your conduct has ever formed a distinguished exception; time and absence, instead of lessening your regard for the natives of India appear to have the effect of increasing it. To your steady and uncompromising advocacy of our cause we feel that we, in a great measure, owe the important civil rights of sitting as Jurymen and acting as Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace. It is felt and acknowledged by all that unless you had stood forward as you did, many years would have elapsed before these important concessions would have been yielded to us. Our individual character and capability for appreciating such high distinctions of social life, if not altogether disbelieved, was at least reluctantly acknowledged by those authorities who have the control of our destinies in England; and

the prejudices existing on the subject could only be overcome by such exertions as your zealous interest in our cause, your personal knowledge of us, and we may add, your peculiarly prominent position as an acknowledged and unvarying friend of India enabled to afford.

"At a period when Natives were held less entitled than they now are to the courtesies of European society, your condescending kindness and friendly treatment on all occasions of personal intercourse effected much in your person to attach them to European character and customs and paved the way for many social advantages which they now enjoy and for which we and our posterity must ever feel grateful.

"To the existing generation *your* virtues and *their* obligations are well-known. The old are acquainted with them from experience and the young have learnt them from grateful report. This, however, is not sufficient and we should be wanting in duty to ourselves did we not take steps to perpetuate in the most lasting form the sentiments entertained by us. With these feelings, it is solicited by us, that you will afford to Sir Francis Chantrey or any other eminent artist, whom you may appoint, such sittings as may enable him to execute a statue which it is our wish to have erected in some conspicuous place in Bombay, so that our children and our children's children may have before them the image of him who was the friend of their fathers and the unwearied advocate of all that tended to benefit India and the people of her soil."

This address was signed by 1012 prominent citizens belonging to all communities and "was beautifully written on parchment in English, Persian and Gujarati characters." It was forwarded to three of India's best friends—the Rt. Hon. Sir Alexander Johnston, the Retired Chief

Justice of Ceylon, Mr. John Romer (1780-1858)\* a Retired Senior Member of the Bombay Council and Captain Cogen of the Indian Navy, and it was presented to Sir Charles at his residence at Fitzroy Square, London, by Sir Alexander in the presence of the above-mentioned gentlemen on the 6th April, 1840 when four Parsi gentlemen who happened to be in London at that time were also present. They were Jehangir Nowrojee Wadia, Hirjibhoy Merwanjee Wadia, Ardesear Cursetjee Wadia and Dorabjee Muncherjee Nanjivora, the first three being in England for studying further the art of shipbuilding. Sir Alexander in his speech said :

— “As the natives of that immense Empire are not represented in the Parliament of Great Britain it is more necessary, considering their numbers, their wealth, their industry, their moral and intellectual acquirements, their loyalty, the nature of their laws, usages and customs, and the strength and peculiarity of their religious feelings, that they should have always a body of tried friends in this country who are alive to their interests and are determined both by a sense of public duty and private friendship to promote their wishes and their welfare and who from the local knowledge which they acquired while in India, and from the high and independent situation which they hold in society in this country, are not only willing but really able to give weight to the opinions which they may have formed with a view to protect the rights and privileges and to improve the agricultural and commercial interests of their fellow subjects in British India. The surest method which the natives of India can take to form such a body of friends and supporters in England is for

\* A Bombay Civil Servant, was also acting Governor of Bombay from January to March 1831, and retired in 1833.

them to show, as they have done on the present occasion, that they can fully appreciate and nobly reward the conduct of those who zealously and efficiently support their cause by conferring upon them such marks of their respect and esteem as must always be gratifying to an independent and disinterested mind....The Address will be read to you by my friend Mr. Ardesear; the talents, the scientific acquirements, and the perfect knowledge of the English language by which he and the other Parsi Gentlemen who are present are so much distinguished, must afford a decisive proof, if any were required, of the moral and intellectual capacity of the natives of India, of their qualifications to fill the highest offices in the Government of their country; and of their right to expect the support and sympathy of their fellow subjects in England, Scotland and Ireland on all occasions in which their interests and happiness may be concerned."

In his reply Sir Charles said:

"No language can express my gratitude for the sentiments conveyed in your address nor how deeply I am affected by an attachment which time and separation serve only to confirm.

"In this difficulty of describing my feelings, I am relieved by the reflection that hearts like yours, capable of preserving so strong a recollection of times long past, can easily comprehend my deep sense of this renewed proof of your regard and that it would be at variance with the character of my affection for you (that of an old and familiar friend from whose thoughts you are never absent) to address you with a studied formality.....

"Statues are generally erected in honour of men who have performed eminent public service such as I have no pretensions to; but I would not exchange for the highest



Born 5-9-1758

Pestonji Bomanji Wadia

Died 20-8-



pretentions of public service the honest feeling of pride and gratification that I owe to your private friendship this splendid evidence of your remembrance.

"I am now as much without the power of serving you as I was twenty-eight years ago, when, on the day of my departure from Bombay you marked your disinterested kindness towards me by a valuable service of Plate which I hope may be handed down to my posterity. That day I never can forget which severed my personal intercourse with the warmest, truest and best friends I ever had, amidst whom I had passed twenty-two years of my life, a period endeared by a confidence, mutual, and unlimited in affairs of business and by a kindliness of disposition on your part which my experience of other communities has shown me to be peculiar to the natives of India.

"This attachment which has endured through so long a period without expectation of benefit on your part or the power of conferring it on mine, may fairly challenge the respect and admiration of mankind in whatever part of the world it may become known.....

"I have now only to reiterate the sentiment I never miss an occasion, either in public or in private, to express that I shall continue to the last on every principle of duty, respect, affection and gratitude, your firm and unalterable friend, your friend, as a fellow subject; your friend, as admiring your excellent qualities; your friend, with reference to the uniformly kind consideration I have received at your hands; and your friend, because I can never forget that it is to you I owe, under God, the humble but independent position I occupy in society."

This shows the nobility of mind of the person who uttered these words and reflects a good deal upon the character of the Indian merchants.

It is to be noted that this is the first instance of the people of India raising a statue to one absolutely unconnected with the civil, military or naval service of the country.

### HIS VIEWS ON LIFE

In his letter of 22nd August 1821 Forbes wrote,

"Do not be too anxious for money, Hormarjee. Give your sons a good education, bring them up in habits of industry and let them work their way in the world as you and I have done, and as I intend my sons should do. Be assured that every Rupee they make for themselves will be valued more than two that we may give them. Why therefore trouble ourselves over much about money which you and I will soon cease to have occasion for; and if we could leave large fortunes *it might mean their ruin*, as we see every day."

It would be appropriate here to mention a word about the confidence and trust which Forbes and Hormarjee had in each other. In the last three or four letters that Hormarjee wrote to Sir Charles before his death on 6th March 1826, the former, after referring to the large sum he owed to the firm, appealed to him that he (Forbes) would watch over the interests of his children. Unfortunately the replies to these letters are not available but we have a letter from Sir Charles to Hormarjee in which he wrote as under:—"Be assured of this however, if the opportunity were offered of showing real friendship towards you or your family *by deeds, not words*, you will not find me backwards in my individual capacity. I hope for ever that you may never have occasion to try your friends by that severe, but as far as my experience goes,

infallible test." And Forbes was true to his words as we find from the following:

From a letter dated 26th March 1826, that is 20 days after Hormarjee's death, which Bomanjee Hormarjee, the eldest son, wrote to Sir Charles, we find that there was a sudden and great rush of depositors on the firm of Hormarjee, as occurs in the case of all bankers, and perhaps, this would have had serious consequences, had not Forbes & Co. immediately advanced a sum of Rs. one lakh and fifty thousand to restore confidence among the creditors of Hormarjee. This timely and very creditable action of Forbes & Co. saved the firm and the rush ceased. It is stated that Sir Charles later on gave up a large sum for the benefit of the family.

From the same letter we find that Hormarjee's safe was opened by his son Bomanjee in the presence of George Forbes and James Forbes when his Will was read in their presence.

We have already noticed the regard and esteem which Sir Charles had for Hormarjee during the latter's lifetime and for his family and a quarter of a century later he held the family with the same regard as the following letter shows:

"My dear young friend HORMARJEE BOMANJEE being the FIRST TIME I have written that respected name since the death of your worthy grandfather. I have had the pleasure of receiving the first letter you have favoured me with, dated the 18th June 1847 which I acknowledge with my own hand not very usual nowadays, since writing has become irksome to me, although to you I doubt not, a pleasing occupation. Your letter is a sensible and well-written one and I shall be happy to hear from you occasionally with such local news and other intelligence as you

may be able to give me and which is always very acceptable. You will not, however, expect me to be a good correspondent for the reason I have mentioned. I am moreover in my 75th year. I cannot wish you better, Hormarjee, than that you may be enabled to follow the example of your worthy father and grandfather as good and gentlemanly men. Present my best regards to all the family and with kind regards towards yourself, Believe me always. My dear young friend, Your ever sincere Charles Forbes" And then he adds a Post Script in bold hand, "BEWARE OF OPIUM" which shows his hatred against the Opium Trade, quite to the end of his eventful life.

We have seen from the above that from the day of his arrival in England in 1811 after residing for 22 years in Bombay till the day of his death in 1849, Sir Charles Forbes never missed an opportunity to do his duty towards the inhabitants of this country in every sphere, whether commercial, political, economic or moral. He never failed to respond to any appeal made to him either publicly or privately. His house in Fitzroy Square was the hospitable home for all Indians who arrived there in those distant times either for business or for studies and it was as much open to the poor as it was to the rich. His letters to his broker Hormarjee Wadia and after the death of the latter to his son breathe sentiments which are highly creditable to the writer and to the recipients. He was a man of sterling independence and integrity. Whilst in Bombay on many an occasion he was appointed a trustee of large estates of individuals on behalf of their owners to wind up their business; and in a number of private disputes he acted as an arbitrator.



SIR CHARLES FORBES, 1st BART.

From a statute in the possession of Messrs. Forbes Forbes Campbell & Co., Lt  
Bombay.



He was kind and generous to a fault. We have no particulars about his public charities beyond what is stated above, in the notice of his life in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, however, it is stated that one of his last acts was the appropriation of a very large sum of money to procure for the inhabitants of Bengal a plentiful supply of pure water in all seasons and it is also stated that he was a munificent contributor to the leading public charities of Scotland. His private munificence was exceptionally large. We have already noticed his benevolence at the time of his retirement from Bombay in 1811. Thirty years later in 1840 he sent out gold and silver articles of daily use to be presented to all the members of his office staff. This was published in the *Bombay Samachar* of 2nd July 1840; and again in 1848 he gave away as a present one month's salary to all the members of his office staff which amounted to the princely sum of Rs. 45,000.

On the night of Tuesday, the 28th November 1849, this great and good man, a true friend and a sincere well-wisher of our countrymen passed away peacefully to his eternal rest. For eight days his body was kept on view to enable his relations and friends to have a last look at him. The sad news of his death reached Bombay on the 3rd January 1850 and it evoked feelings of regret all over the Island and the day was observed as one of mourning by the people. The London *Times* wrote:— “Sir Charles had sympathy even for those who had done wrong to him and as regards those who suffered from their own foolish actions he never ceased to have compassion for them. To commend the good qualities in others and not to think of himself was the chief trait in his character.”

How great was the esteem in which the memory of Sir Charles was held by the people long after he was dead and what an indelible impression he had left of his goodness on their minds will be seen from the following:

Muncherji Hormusji Cama (1813-1894) a scion of the well-known Cama family and one of the founders of the first Indian Commercial Firm in London, Cama & Co., had never seen Sir Charles, for he went to England only in 1855. Yet such were his feelings of gratitude he had for the memory of Sir Charles, that when he left England to return to the city of his birth he forwarded a cheque of £1,500 to the Second Baronet of that revered name with the following letter:

"I know the debt of gratitude which our country owes to your late venerated father, the first Sir Charles Forbes, Bart. I am glad to say that he has not been forgotten in Bombay. Enclosed is a cheque for £1,500 from our Firm, the amount to be disposed of in building a school or in such other manner as you may think best to commemorate his good name as a benefactor of India."

In publicly acknowledging this gift, Sir Charles wrote to the Editor of the *Banffshire Journal*\*:

of a girls' school under the name of "Cama Girls School". The site will be near my West approach of Castle Newe and I hope my descendants will give it their affectionate attention and that the building of the Institution may remain a more beautiful and useful monument to the Memory of the First Baronet of Newe than stones and earvings and other memorials that do no good to the generations."

We conclude this article with the following quotation from the *Dictionary of National Biography*:

"As a member of the House of Commons he enjoyed the respect of all parties for his love of justice, kindly feeling and plain, straightforward honesty. Though a Tory of the Tories, he never allowed his political creed to cloud his fine judgment and keen sense of right and wrong and his manly spirit was readily engaged in favour of the poor, the weak and the persecuted. He warmly supported Catholic Emancipation and when the Duke of Wellington incurred great unpopularity in 1830, Forbes pronounced in the House of Commons a warm panegyric of the Duke's conduct. He was one of the earliest to advocate the claims of women to the franchise. In the session of 1831 he asked upon what reasonable grounds they could be excluded from political rights, pointing out that the ladies had the power of voting for a Director of the E. I. Co. and maintaining that if the right of voting was granted on the possession of property there ought to be no distinction of sex. He was a strong opponent of the Reform Bill of 1831-32. During the Debate he spoke of the measure, 'as the wild Reform Bill, that hideous monster the most frightful that ever showed its face in that House.' He declared that he should follow it to the last

with uncompromising hostility and if it were carried he should rejoice in abandoning Parliament. Forbes was most distinguished in connection with India. From his long residence in the East, he knew the people intimately and he spent a large portion of his fortune in their aidst. In Parliament and in the Proprietors' Court of the E. I. Co. his advocacy of justice for India was ardent and untiring. His fame spread from one end of Hindustan to the other. In his private character he was most liberal. He was a munificent contributor to the leading public charities of Scotland. He was of a bluff but kindly nature, diffident as to his own merits, of a straightforward and manly character."

